

WOMEN IN THE POETRY OF SHAHRIYAR

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ABSTRACT

Mahammadhuseyn Shahriyar, one of the greatest poets of XX century, also talked about Azerbaijani woman, whom he considered his crown and good luck, and he gave a big place to woman in his rich poetry.

Of course, there are three women in humankind's, especially writers', poets', artists' lives who have big influences on them. The first of them is the one who brought them to the light, who gave them life – mother. The second is the one whom they loved, the woman who sits on the throne of their hearts. The third is the one whom he married to, the mother of his children and the creator of his warm home. In Shahriyar's life also these three women had biggest influences, and the love towards them is felt in all his poetry.

These women have been by his side in separate stages of his life, whenever he felt woes in his heart they were the ones whom he could rely on.

He wrote about woman as a character from nature, and called her “my Sahand” meaning the mountain Sahand... In this poem the Mother Nature and Woman – two powers were compared which draws much attention.

Shahriyar was a poet with a heart that wanted to fight for his moral values and praising women to the highest level in the society, as well as writing the wishes and desires of this society. This heart's bearer only said the truth. He told only truth about the women, pointing at their place in the life of society in Azerbaijan and generally Eastern world, proving and improving the opinions of his predecessors and successors.

KEYWORDS: *Shahriyar, Women, Poetry, Sahand & Mother Love*

Original Article

Received: Nov 21, 2019; **Accepted:** Dec 11, 2019; **Published:** Jan 31, 2020; **Paper Id.:** IJELFEB20204

INTRODUCTION

Ibn Battuta (1304-1369), the famous traveller and author of “Tohfatur-Nuzzar fi Garaibil-Amsar wa Ajaibil-Asfar”, who went on a pilgrimage to Meccah and accomplished heroic trips to Africa, Middle and Far East notes in his work: **“Women are respected to a great extent within Turkic and Tatar tribes. Whenever they issue an order there must be this sentence: “By the order of the Sultan and his wives”. Each of the women is a copartner in the rule of the territories and they own a big income. They go on wars with their kings but they stay in their own headquarters”.**

In the pre-Islamic Sumerian East “women were valued highly and there was no pressure on them for religious reasons. The greatest divine characters were considered female, and owned female names. The relationship between husbands and wives were also held highly valued. In the Book of Dede Korkut we can still feel this tendency. Women were shooting arrows, spears in the fights against enemies. They were fighting, protecting their honors, riding horses. They weren't held in a harem and they were free. A Turkic didn't feel the need for that. A woman was a sign of divinity, she wasn't hidden from the society, she was a friend to her

husband and her husband wasn't superior to her. She was considered the "crown of her husband" and "his good luck"¹.

FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SHAHRIYAR'S POETRY

Mahammadhuseyn Shahriyar, one of the greatest poets of XX century, also talked about Azerbaijani woman, whom he considered his crown and good luck, and he gave a big place to woman in his rich poetry.

Of course, there are three women in humankind's, especially writers', poets', artists' lives who have big influences on them. The first of them is the one who brought them to the light, who gave them life – mother. The second is the one whom they loved, the woman who sits on the throne of their hearts. The third is the one whom he married to, the mother of his children and the creator of his warm home. In Shahriyar's life also these three women had biggest influences, and the love towards them is felt in all his poetry.

These women have been by his side in separate stages of his life, whenever he felt woes in his heart they were the ones whom he could rely on.

The first of those three women is his mother – Lady Kowkab, the woman who ran for him as soon as she heard her son is sick, trying to heal her with her love of mother. In the introduction of the first edition of Shahriyar's "Salute to Heydarbaba" (1954) he wrote: "When my late mother came to Tehran I remembered about the happy past days of my childhood, the dead were revived, the old portraits were back in colors, because of her magical atmosphere"².

When he was little his world of love was limited to Lady Kowkab, but still this love was very deep and broad that he wrote in his memoirs that "we used to go to hamam with my mother. When I was 6 I was forbidden to go in. Whenever I was playing with kids from our yard and I saw that mother was going to hamam, I used to go to hamam and wait for her on the door. I was blind to all other entertainments till my mother came. As soon as I see mother I used to embrace her knees, I used to tremble. I was like my mother, that's why she was worried for me. We both used to return home with our eyes in tears, as if we haven't seen each other for 20 years"³. In the ode "Ey-vay, Anam!" (Oh, mother!) the poet created a bright character of his mother saying "My mother created me, and I the world":

My mother's in my poem, in my sorrow,

Know, I've inherited poethood from her,

Love is not going to die...

The beautiful, dear lieds she sang,

Pleasant tales, loevly words

Were absorbed by my soul when I was a baby...

My nerves and body are tuned with lullabies...

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¹ www.asifata.com/3965.htm

² "Azerbaijan" journal. Ankara. №4-5, 1995, p.3.

³ Böyük Nikəndiş Nəbər. Şəhriyarın xelvet dünyası, II c., Tebriz: Periver nəşriyyatı, 1379/2000, p.121-124.

*Sometimes it sprinkled tears over my soul,
Gave me this woe with all love and caress...
Like ther's thunder in my existence.
My love is knead with that very inspiration...*⁴

What made Shahriyar write in his mother tongue was Lady Kowkab again saying "Son, they say you're a great poet, but I don't understand what you write. Can't you write in our own language that I would also understand and enjoy your poetry?"⁵. The clarity of the language, its flawlessness in the "Salute to Heydarbaba" surprised everybody and was dedicated to the memory of his mother, relatives, as if Shahriyar wanted to pay his moral debts to them, turning himself into a poet that Turkic world now is proud of. His mother's blessings and his own talent raises him to the peak of fame. His works inspired hundreds of poets motivating them to write other "Salute to Heydarbaba"s. This literary process was occurring in such a period that first Shah Reza, and later Shah Mohammadali Pahlavi was ruling and Turkic identity and language were degraded and forbidden. Of course, obedience to laws was inevitable. "Young Shahriyar had to write in persian to gain social status, and supply his needs"⁶ and he chose this very way making himself the brightest poet of Iranian literature, and bringing him the status of "Hafiz-i-Sani", Sadi of his century.

The death of Lady Kowkab in 1952 wounded the poet's heart and he wrote the second part of "Salute to Heydarbaba". Conquering the readers' hearts, he wrote this part in Turkish and he cheers up himself thinking that his mother would have been happy about it: "I had a deep and great interest to poetry, every piece that I created was a result of the pain of separation from a friend. It is normal to weep of farewell with a sweetheart. The "Salute to Heydarbaba" and "Vay, vay maderem" (Oh, mother!) pieces found bodies from my last tears of farewell"⁷.

"Though you have first father, then mother, my brother, the result is that you have a child"⁸. That is the reason why the poet considered every smallest point his (whom he called "his affection, clemency, his craving") and all other mothers touched the paradise:

*If there's respect to mother in humankind
They wouldn't shed blood ever.
If that respect conquers the world,
It would create the heaven on Earth.
So said the great Mohammad:
"Heaven is under mothers' feet"*⁹.

The second factor affecting the Shahriyar poetry, adding sad notes on his works was his first love, a girl called Suraya, a student of Medicine in the Tehran University. Very unfortunately, his love to this girl, the sister of his

⁴Şehriyar M. Seçilmiş eserleri B. "Elm" – 2000, 492 p., p.384.

⁵ Fuad (Şükürova) E. Söz serraflı Şehriyar (Monoqrafiya, şekilli). Bakı: "Avrasiya-Press", 2010, 304 p., p.88.

⁶<http://teleqraf.com/news/53536#sthash.2ow1FoGi.dpuf>.

⁷"Azerbaycan" journal. Ankara. №4-5, 1995.p.4.

⁸ Seyyid Aliekbər Ocaqnejad. M.Şebüstərinin Gülşeni-Razına bir baxış. Hikmet jurnalı, № 11, 2007, s.10.

⁹ Eskikitaplarim.com

groupmate, the daughter of a colonel in the Shah's army came to be unanswered. Thus, the girl, whom he called "Pari" (fairy) was forcedly wedded to Chiragali khan, a close relative of Shah Reza Pahlavi. He begged her mother to see her for one last time, and desperate mother agreed to the meeting. He decided to kidnap Pari when they met in the Behjatabad park in Tehran... However, when he came to the park to do what he planned, he didn't see his lover, Pari didn't come. He waited till morning, but she didn't come. He couldn't forget that cursed night his whole life, and the pain he felt that night made him write the famous ode "Behjatabad Memory" in Turkish. He poured all his emotions and eternal feelings into this ode. It's not a coincidence that mother tongue comes to help when a human, especially poets "feel sad, dream, meaning when they get emotional. "Behjatabad Memory" is written in such simple language, so flowless that it "burns" the soul of the reader. This ode became to be one of the masterpieces of Shahriyar. Even if he didn't write any poems at all, this one would have made him the greatest poet of Turkish language"¹⁰.

Later he expressed his love, his suffering and how he craved for Pari in the odes "Pari", "Tonight", "Sorrowful wails", "The smell of blouse", "Sad ney", "The revenge of love", "The moth burning in flames", "The moon in Safar", "The lost Josef", "My fate", "Suzi-saz", "Now why?", "My tar" etc. We see the most splendid example of this craving in the ode "Behjatabad Memory":

*I waited each night counting the stars,
Love is still being late, it's already midnight.
...That's my fear, love wouldn't come till dawn,
My bosom would burn, my dawn, don't come!
The love wouldn't have loyalty,
I don't know why nature decided to do so?
I'm in deep woes since that day on,
These days are what makes me sick.
Shahriyar had blossoming love,
But fall came, made the spring blue¹¹.*

The odes "You coquet", "Don't go Tersa kid", "Now why?" were also addressed to the woman he loved, the women he called the Azerbaijan's beauty, the lady who deserved this love...

The third woman leaving her traces in the Shahriyar poetry was his wife Aziza, the woman who stayed by his side life long, his aunt's granddaughter. The poet married this 23 years old girl when he was 48, in 1953. We know that this marriage brought spring to Shahriyar's miserable life, turned his days of "hell" into ones of heaven. The poet's "Ill-fated head" ode which contains sense of humour was dedicated to Aziza khanum, the main character of the ode... In the "field of life" he saw himself as the ox, meanwhile his wife as the calf, due to the age difference between them, and in one of his odes he wrote "fight of wife and husband is like a rain in spring", adding a pleasant mood to this unpleasant situation, even writing in the first line that "Sweetheart made my day blue, asking to divorce her, have you ever seen a farmer prefer a calf

¹⁰<http://telegraf.com/news/53536#sthash.2ow1FoGi.dpuf>.

¹¹Şehriyar M. Seçilmiş eserləri. B., Azərənşr, 1966, p.28.

to an ox for braces?!".

Azerbaijani lady considers her marriage sacred, and the children from this marriage make it even stronger. A woman keeps blind to the mistakes she can forgive even if they have problems between them, to protect the family honor, to bring up their children with family's love. Shahriyar draws attention to a nation's typicalness as following:

**We have had three children as deer by now,
Mother and father must reconcile for their sake in the end¹².**

However this happiness didn't last long either, 23 years later the happy life of this couple ended. Doctor Javad Heyat insisted on moving him to a house in Tehran in 1976. Aziza khanum first strongly objected, though later she thought it could hurt the poet and agreed to this moving. And this moving didn't bring luck to Shahriyar. Aziza khanum passed away because of a heart attack and was buried in "Behishti-Zahra" cemetery in Tehran. This loss affected the poet very badly, and he wrote two poems for his dearest wife, like "Aziza jan", "One bride", and expressed his sadness of his three children after their mother's death. The sorrow coming from this death followed the poet till the end of his life. The poet's grief was reflected in the ode dedicated to her:

*What graceful bride, Aziza, you
Were made for me by God.
When the infamous death visited us
My moon shone, my sun set down.
Why didn't you hear, children
Were weeping the mother wails...
Mother moaned hurting her heart,
The world poisoned her...¹³*

By the way, it's noteworthy that the poet respected Iranian and Azerbaijani women a lot, dedicated poems for them, their successes. One of them was great singer Gamar-ul-mulk Vaziri, another was Hokuma Bulluri, who travelled to North, and the other was Parwin Etisami, with whom he had literary conversations and exchanged opinions. In an ode dedicated to Etisami and in another poem about her, named "Remembering the unfortunate poetess Parwin Etisami" he glorified the "bright star of Iranian poetry, and talked about their friendship"¹⁴. This admiration was not haphazard. Shahriyar saw Etisami, who was brought up by "God in the cradle of galaxies". He saw her as a flame in the darkness, living a life that will be remembered for centuries. He said he is weak in front of this greatness and confessed there wouldn't be any person to interpret her:

*Whoever takes the pen in front of literature,
Would write, if it meets Parwin's art.*

¹²Şehriyar M. Yalan dünya. Azərbaycan Ensiklopediyası. NPB. 1993, 496 p., p.30.

¹³ Şehriyar M. Divani-türki, B., "Elnuda-Sabah", 1993,

¹⁴ Səfəri H. İran ədəbiyyatı səmasının parlaq ulduzu Pərvin Etisami üçün. Hikmət journal, № 11, 2007, p.148-151.

*This crescent is inspiration's screen,
The necklace from stars, gilt from the rays of sun.
Was so virgin like born from lights,
Is great Parwin's world of words
Uncountable stars decorate her world¹⁵.*

Iran's great scientist Said Nafisi was also enchanted by Etisami's inner world, her soft nature, humanist thoughts: "Parwin's existence is so full of emotions, feelings and love that this creates anxiety for her. She cries for dogs, cats, poultry, all the orphans and homeless people, her wailing for the humanity is against all the violence and cruelty in world".

This character is introduced in the poem "Hey, woman" where the poet cursed those who covered women in black veils, made them live under ignorance and pushing them to death alive. The poet, Mirzazadeh Eshgi, who couldn't stay silent before this kind of civil and social problems wrote "as long as our women are covered in veils, the half of this nation is dead. If a nation's women are unhappy, that nation's men cannot be happy either"¹⁶. He expressed his feeling against this situation in his poems with a poetic language. The fact that women were disrespected in society, family and even in the religion while she was being held so high in literature and poetry hurt the poet so much. The women were disrespected about whom his predecessors wrote, like Fuzuli saying "Amazed, hey fetish!", Nasimi sacrificing the galaxies for love, Khatai calling his lover "Sultan" and giving his life for her, Hafiz forgiving all Samargand for just one beauty. And this humiliation almost has turned into a tradition, passing from one century to another... Shahriyar considers women the creators of skies and lands, who bore prophets like Mohammad, David, Abraham, Messiah, Solomon, Josef, calls for demanding rights of women, and wishes that women would tear the mourning dress off them and throw the black veils away:

*Tell me about your right, lady!
Break these heavy chains, let everyone say your name.
Tear this dress of mourning in this morning,
Let the horizon take its lights from you.
You, who bore the Messiah,
Maybe are the one who created the skies too?¹⁷*

The master poet calls woman the prototype of the sun, the bright moon, wishing them to live as they want, to be like lieds in the musical instruments... Rather than bending in front of the woes and sorrow as big as oceans...

*Don't break my heart with this endless sorrow
Keep the flag of honor high with your behavior,
Sting the flag of happiness to the world.*

¹⁵Eskikitaplarim.com

¹⁶Hüseynov B. XX əsr fars şerində ənənə və novatorluq. B. «Elm», 1975, 338 p, p.189.

¹⁷Şəhriyar M. Seçilmiş əsərləri B. "Elm" – 2000, 492 p., p.132.

*I'd like to see no tear anymore in your eyes,
Be courageous, let the world see this bravery¹⁸.*

The notion of woman became socialized during the Soviet time, but she was never free. As Asif Afandiyev writes, woman “was fit for herself, not for her family, not for her husband, was fit for the society, not for the womanhood. She was free from the chains of her husband, wanted to replace the man at home, but left the family without lead. She talked like a man, lost her speech, behaved like a man, lost her behavior. She walked like a man, lost her walking. She wasn’t a daughter to her mother, but a son. She kissed her child in a hurry. She left her child without caress. She wasn’t fit for home. She managed the group at work, but couldn’t manage her life. She was beautiful for everyone, but ugly for her husband. She was happy, but not loved, she found time for being activist, but not for being a woman. She searched for herself but couldn’t find! Poetry, music make woman divine, keep her high as the skies, but life and society trample her down to the grounds. That is the fate of woman”.

Shahriyar bravely protested against this fate, wrote with the wish to change this situation... For him woman deserved to be worshipped...

He wrote about woman as a character from nature, and called her “my Sahand” meaning the mountain Sahand... In this poem the Mother Nature and Woman – two powers were compared which draws much attention. According to Guntay Ganjalp who takes “My Sahand” for the masterpiece of Shahriyar, “the poet sees the nature as female. He also defines touching to nature as touching to a woman¹⁹”.

*Wear the white fur right now, you'll wear green in spring,
You will eat helwa from fire...
You have such sweet springs
on chest like swans'...
You have these coquets on the green flows
in a clear morning...²⁰*

This tendency continues in the poem “Salute to Heydarbaba” where he sees the mountain as woman – bearer-creator, and asks her to give birth to sons to bring peace to this world, create security for the nation:

*Heydarbaba, give birth to brave sons,
Punish their coward noses,
Capture the wolves in the woods,
Let the sheep eat the grass,
Fold their own tails²¹.*

¹⁸Ibid., p.132.

¹⁹<http://axar.az/news/45682>

²⁰Şehriyar M. Yalan dünya. Azərbaycan Ensiklopediyası. NPB. 1993, 496 p., p.74.

²¹Yenə orada, p.165.

“We see the men’s tough approach even in the softest examples of our literature like the poem “Salute to Heydarbaba”: *Heydarbaba, give birth to brave sons*. That is a man’s voice, we hear a woman very rarely”, says Eyvaz Taha, who emphasises on the necessity of changing the attitude towards women comparing the freedom levels of women between the North and the South. *Like in many nations’ histories, our history is also an arena for men. It’s true that in the Book of Dede Korkut, Asli and Karam, Abbas and Gulgaz we see female characters. However these are extremes. By saying extreme we don’t want to emphasize that arabs buried their daughters alive. We know that in the Code of Hammurabi it was said that if a man beats an aristocrat’s daughter to death, then the girl herself is to be punished, not the man. Fortunately this was left behind already. Now we want to say that: the center was always in men’s hands. The result of this is clear. When the woman’s voice fades away from the literature that hemisphere of history remains silent: The modern initiatives cannot break this silence because they don’t return women as a leading factor in the society. They allocate a decorative place for women in the extreme*”²².

Mahammad Hadi who wrote serial poems with the purpose of “Women need to be highened!” thought it is one of the key conditions for women to be active in the social life: “A nation showing no respect to women cannot be respected either.. Eastearn societies are doomed to be behind the West as long as they put women in the second plan and as long as they don’t give them the place they deserve”²³.

Husein Javid talked about women and their value, generalizing his thoughts and transferring them into the prophet’s words in the piece “Prophet”:

Woman - sun, child – moon... it gets its light from the sun

Without woman the country would be forlorn.

Though the world could be happy with her.

She, an angel... the great God praises her.

She is a lovely, beautiful creature,

And heaven is under her feet.

If woman smiles our lost world will smile,

*The crawling humankind will rise up with her...*²⁴

CONCLUSIONS

In Shahriyar’s poetry there is a character of a woman formed in the context of conflicts created by exploitation of women, their freedom, gender inequality and other social problems, except the influence of Lady Kowkab, Suraya-Pari, Aziza khanum, other above-mentioned poetesses and his cousins Rukhsara, his aunt Sitara and others.

Shahriyar was a poet with a heart that wanted to fight for his moral values and praising women to the highest level in the society, as well as writing the wishes and desires of this society. This heart’s bearer only said the truth... He told only

²²Şeir, qadın şairlər və feminizm | Eyvaz Taha | www.eyvaz.org

²³Azerbaycanlı şair Mehmed Hâdinin türk matbuatındaki yazıları (1910-1913). Mehdi Genceli (Marmara Üniversitesi /Türkiye), p.251-254

²⁴<http://www.rem.sheki.org/meqaleler/09112015-1>

truth about the women, pointing at their place in the life of society in Azerbaijan and generally Eastern world, proving and improving the opinions of his predecessors and successors...

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AUTHOR PROFILE



Esmira Fuad, was born in 1958 in Azerbaijan. 1983 graduated from the Philology Faculty of Baku State University. She is a leading researcher at the South Azerbaijan Literature Department. She created Book Foundation named "Mirza Ibrahimov ". She is a Doctor of Philosophy in Philology sciences. About 100 scientific and literary articles, including dozens of publicist articles of Mrs.Esmira, have been published in the periodicals. She was one of the winners of the State Committee on Family, Women and Children problems, in the contest of writers and journalists writing the role of Azerbaijani women for the victory of Great Patriotic War and the Khojaly genocide at the Nizami Ganjavi Institute of Literature ... Elected Representative to the 3rd Congress of Azerbaijani Women .She has been named expert on South Azerbaijan literature by American Institute of Biography. In 2016, she was selected as the Scholar of the Year at the Institute of Literature named after Nizami of ANAS.

She was awarded with the "Araz" High Literature, "the Golden Pen", "Natavan Khan Daughter", and "Hasanbay Zardabi" and "Samad Behrangi" awards, also awarded with the "Gold Medal" by the European publishing House, and "the Shahriyar", by the EBB and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. She is Laureate of diploma. Esmira Fuad, author of more than 80 scientific and numerous publicist articles, 1. People's life in Shahriyar's poetry; 2. "Mohammad Huseyn

Shahriyar (literary environment, life and creativity)"; 3. "Even if I had a lifetime"; 4. "Black Machine with a white face"; 5. "Kamil of Azerbaijan carpet art"; 6. "People of the world"; 7. "Speech Shahriyar"; 8. "Poetic Sources of Poetry"; 9. "Word-lovers" - Book I; 10. "Guba and the Dome (co-author)"; 11. "Zakir Bagirov-90. He came to life only to do good." 12. "Muhammed Hussein Şehriyar. Edebi Circle, Life, Works (Monograph) -Turkey in Istanbul "; 13. "20th Century South Azerbaijan Epic Poetry (Monograph) 14." Modern Literary Process in Southern Azerbaijan (Monograph) "; 15. "Bakirnam (Monograph)," "Eternal Poet of Turan - Bakhtiar Vahabzade (Monograph)", 17. "Words - Anthology of the 20th Century South Azerbaijani Poems", 18. "The first Urdu Turk. The Cradle of Love, the Urm Poetry Anthology (376 pages), 19. "The Southern Anthology of the Present Day (1032 pp.)" and 20. "Poetic Memories". The first of three books to be published, The Words of Love, was released at the end of 2011. In this series, "Words are Favorite. Face to Tabriz. Book II and Modernism in South Azerbaijani Literature is currently in print.

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